Montana Outdoors

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JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2026

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JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2026

I first stumbled upon the photo issue of *Montana Outdoors* as a college student in the late 1990s. I was instantly spellbound. It captured all my fascinations with Montana—the fish, the wildlife, the landscapes, and the boundless opportunities for adventure.

I began collecting every new edition, each one a fresh opus to the splendor of the Treasure State, filling me with pride for this place and energizing me to get outside and experience more of it in the coming year.

That affinity only grew once I bought a camera and several lenses hoping to capture the quality of images I saw in those magazines. I eventually began submitting photos, and I'll never forget the elation of learning my shot of a wild turkey had made the cut for the 2011 photo issue. I got to relive that thrill several more times over the next 15 years.

Now that I'm editor, I can fully appreciate just how tough a task it has been for Amanda Reese, *Montana Outdoors* art director, to narrow down the thousands of incredible images submitted by photographers to just 120 selections she artfully packaged into this issue. We hope you enjoy it.

Last year's photo edition sold out at newsstands across the state, a testament to the enduring value of authentic photography at a time when artificial intelligence is flooding social media feeds with digital fakery. Montana doesn't need that charade. The magic and power here is real and right outside our doors.

As you page through and find yourself drawn in by an image, pause for a moment to appreciate that it may have taken years of effort by the photographer to be in the right place, at the right time, with the right lens. Then savor the fact that Montana is still a place where jaw-dropping scenes remain a daily occurrence.

—Paul Queneau, Editor

PATRICIA BAUCHMAN
Front cover: A red fox peeking over the snow in southwestern Montana

BRIAN CHRISTIANSON
Above: A waterfall at sunrise in the Rattlesnake Wilderness near Missoula

DONALD M. JONES
Right: Burrowing owlets in the last rays of evening light in Cascade County

RANDY BEACHAM

Right: Northern pygmy owl in the Yaak Valley

DUANE HUIE

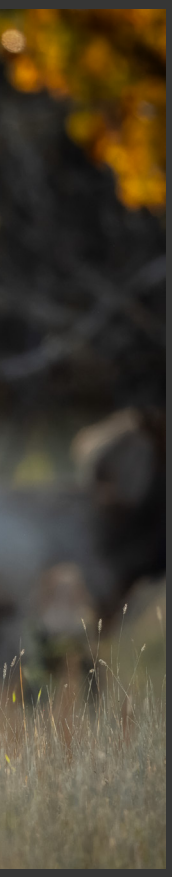
Opposite: Sub-adult grizzly in Tom Miner Basin near Emigrant

KARL KRIEGER

Right: Elk herd in Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge

ZACK CLOTHIER

Opposite: Mountain lion via camera trap in western Montana



DILLON JENKINS
Left: Aerial view of western larches along Grant Creek near Missoula

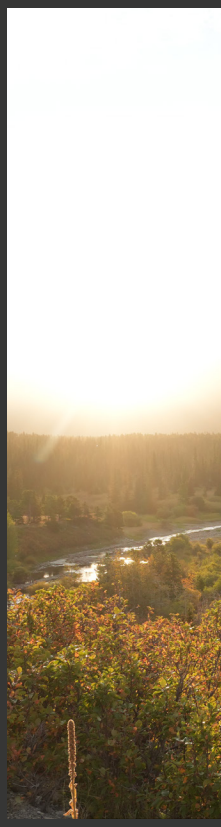
Opposite page:

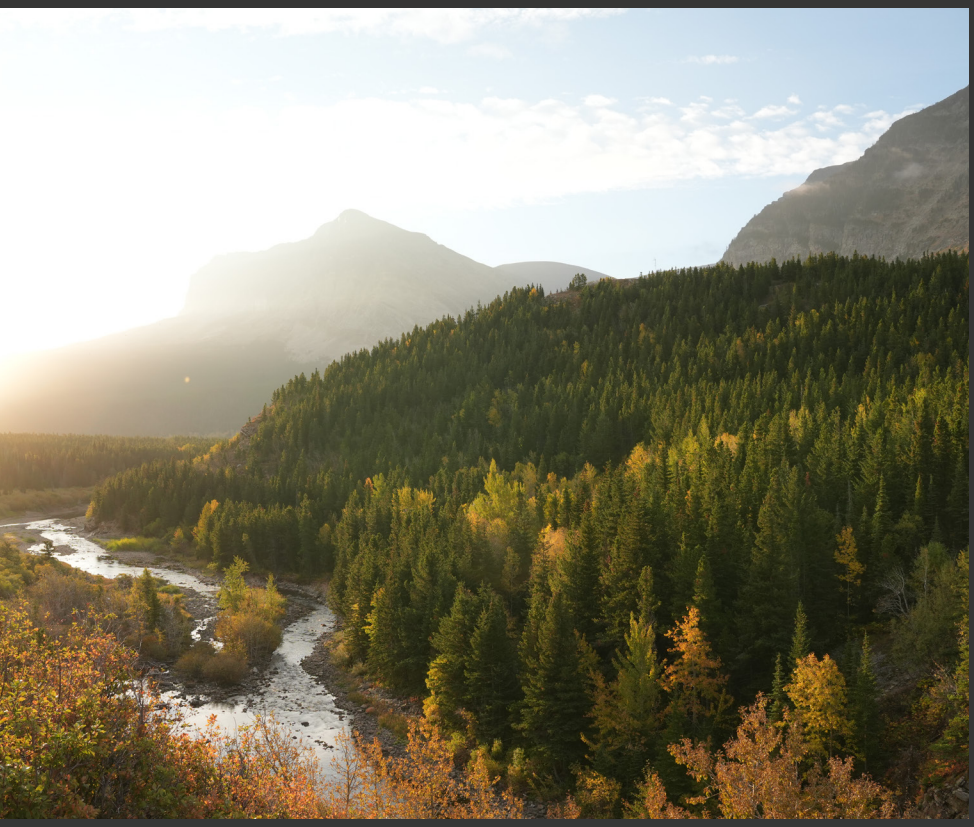
CLAYTON LUKES
Top left: Swiftcurrent Creek sunrise

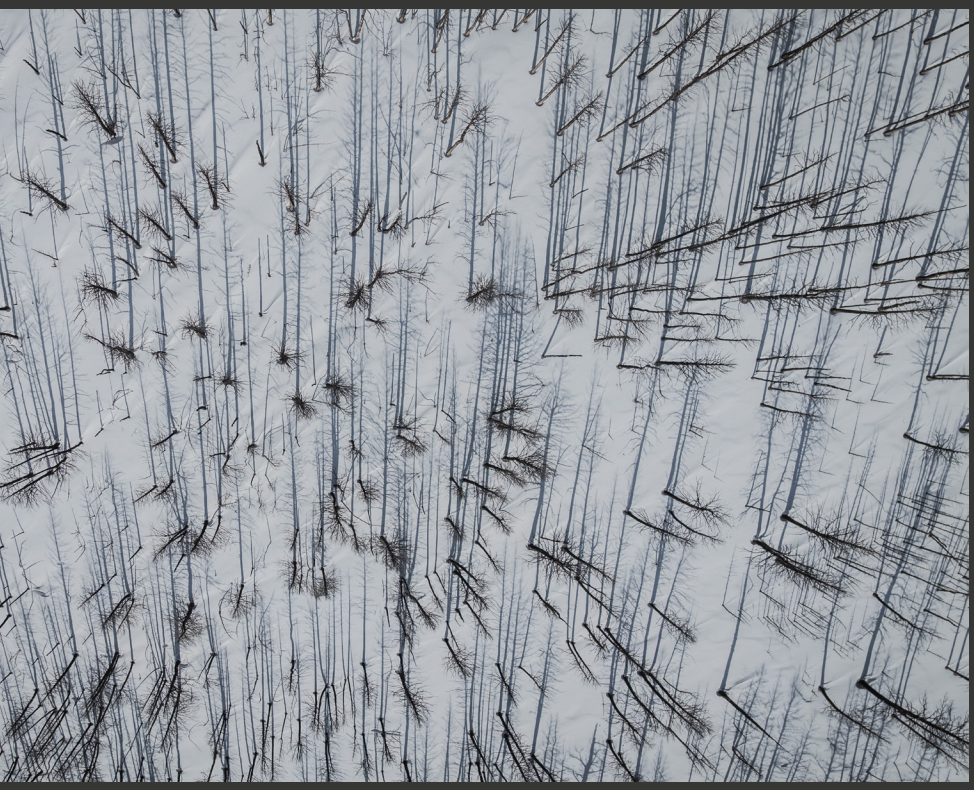
KEVIN LEAGUE
Top right: Western larches in fall near Seeley Lake

LANCE GILLILAND
Bottom left: Burned forest in the Bridger Mountains

SEAN HEAVEY
Bottom right: Makoshika State Park, post-wildfire







CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
Right: Short-eared owl at sunrise near Charlo

KEVIN LEAGUE
Opposite top: Crazy Mountains at dawn

ELBIE WOOD
Opposite left: Aerial view of the North Fork of the Sun River in the Bob Marshall Wilderness

MARK PETERS
Opposite middle right: Bull elk in the Mission Valley

WILLIAM WOESSNER
Opposite bottom right: Snow geese at sunrise over Freezout Lake

RANDY BEACHAM
Top left: Pileated woodpecker in the Yaak Valley

KAILEY BLOOD
Bottom left: Whitetail fawn near Heron

CRAIG MILLER
Above: Swift foxes on the Hi-Line

KARL KRIEGER

Top middle: Black bear near Many Glacier

CHRIS AUCH

Above: Bighorn rams at Wild Horse Island State Park

STEVEN GNAM

Opposite: Canada lynx via camera trap in western Montana

ALEX WEST

Left: Red Lodge Palisades

RHEA ASHMORE

Opposite: Frosty winter evening in Missoula

JEFF MOORE

Left: Shed hunter having a good day in the Absarokas

Opposite page:

ADDIE LOHMAN
Top left: Fall colors on the Dearborn River in the Scapegoat Wilderness

SHEILA RUBLE
Top right: Fritillary butterfly

ROBERT HANSON
Middle: Dew on lupine leaves

PATRICK SHEPARD
Bottom left: Sap flowing from Douglas fir in autumn

LEE HULL
Bottom right: Bull moose shedding velvet in early September

This page:

JUDY BOYLE
Deconica mushrooms among field horsetail and aspen leaves

JOSHUA RUTLEDGE
Left: Male sharp-tailed grouse in full mating display on a lek

Opposite page:

JOSHUA RUTLEDGE
Top left: Young porcupine eating alfalfa

SHEILA RUBLE
Top right: Tachinid fly in Park County's West Boulder River valley

DEE LINNELL BLANK
Bottom right: Bitterroot and stonecrop blooms in the Badger-Two Medicine area

ELIZABETH JARVIS
Top left: Red-winged blackbird near Freezout Lake

RAYMOND JUNK JR.
Top right: Sandhill crane mating dance near Kalispell

ALLY BRYK
Bottom: A Drahthaar retriever on a frosty morning in northeastern Montana

Opposite page:

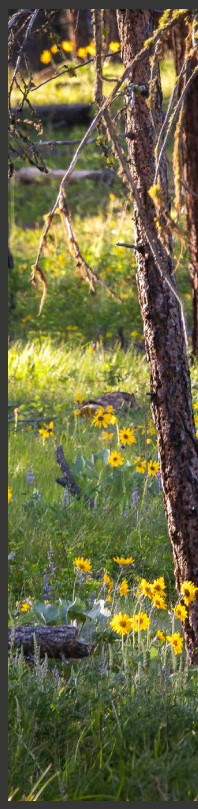
JOSHUA RUTLEDGE
Top: Rooster pheasant at sunset

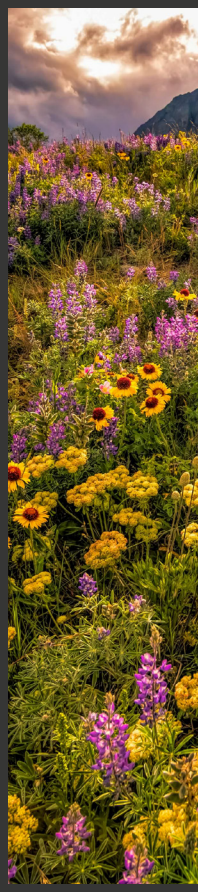
ERIN BRAATEN
Middle left: Foggy morning hunt

DEA VOGEL
Middle right: Pronghorn on the CSKT Bison Range

STEVE PARKER
Bottom left: Red fox sleeping on hay bales near Melrose

JOHN CARLSON
Bottom right: Horned lark in Valley County

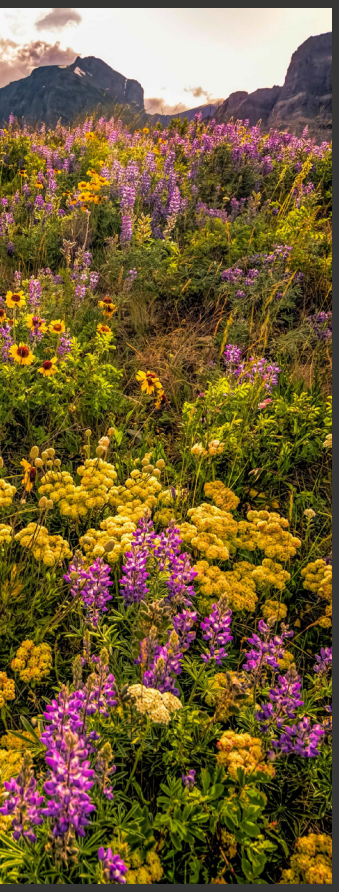


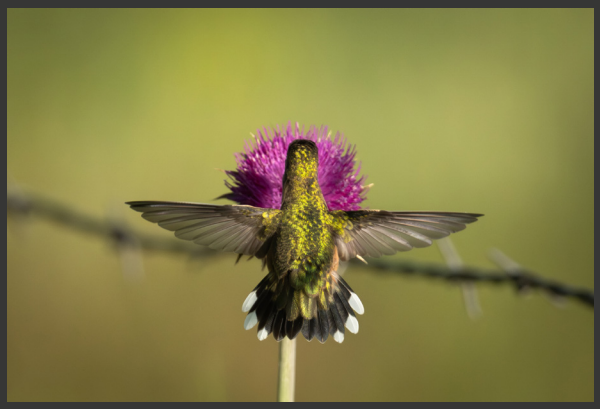


CRAIG MILLER
Above: Bull moose in northwestern Montana

BRIAN CHRISTIANSON
Top right: Female black bear in arrowleaf balsamroot and lupine blossoms

ERIN BRAATEN
Bottom middle: Many Glacier at full bloom





JOEL MAES

Above middle: Female calliope hummingbird feeding on a musk thistle

CHUCK HANEY

Above: Mountain douglasia blossoms under a whitebark pine in the Lewis and Clark National Forest

LAURA VERHAEGHE

Above: Paintbrush and lupine blooming near Helmville

KARL KRIEGER
Left: Canada goose on the Missouri River

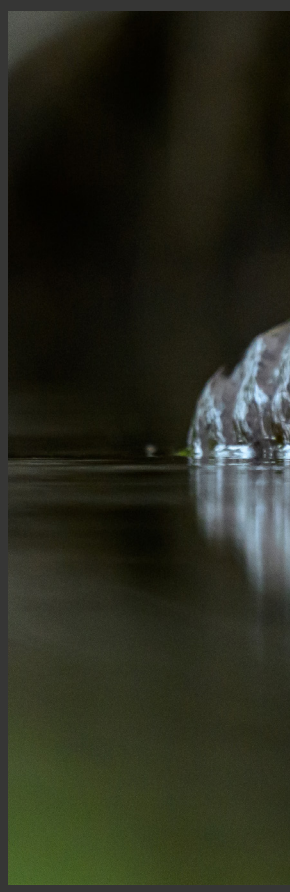
COLE KIMZEY
Right: American coot toting nesting material

JERRY TAYLOR
Far right: Blue-winged teal in a slough off the Yellowstone River near Fallon

LEA FRYE
Right: Red-necked grebe courtship rituals

DAN ELLISON
Left: Trumpeter swan cygnets at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge

COLE KIMZEY
Right: Dabbling duck



TRACY ENTERLINE
Top left: Western tanager near Silesia

DONALD M. JONES
Left: Blue jay

MATT CONDON
Middle left: Painted turtle north of Clinton

BILL KINNEY
Bottom: Beaver in the Big Belt Mountains

Opposite page:

THOMAS ASTLE
Top left: Male jumping spider

LEA FRYE
Top right: Badger near Havre

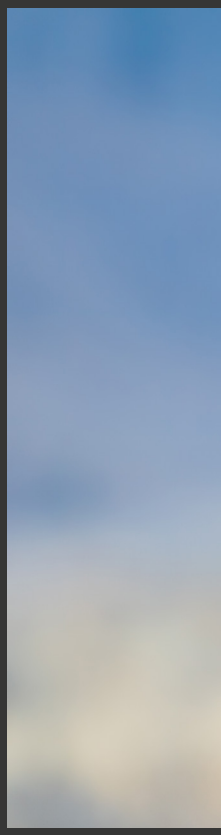
DEBBIE LEFF
Middle left: Hoary marmots in Glacier National Park

KARL KRIEGER
Middle right: Young raccoon in a cottonwood on the Rocky Mountain Front

PATRICIA BAUCHMAN
Bottom left: Leaping pine marten in southwestern Montana

HEATHER EVELETH
Bottom right: Terrestrial garter snake in Como Lake near Darby

PATRICK CLAYTON
Rainbow trout on the upper Madison River

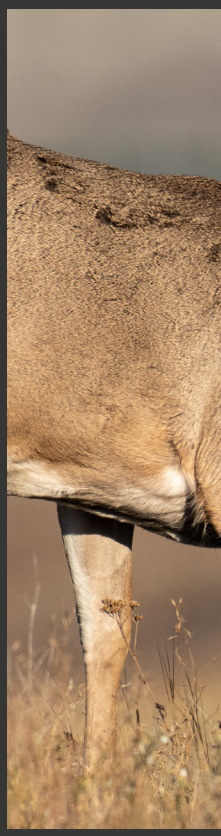


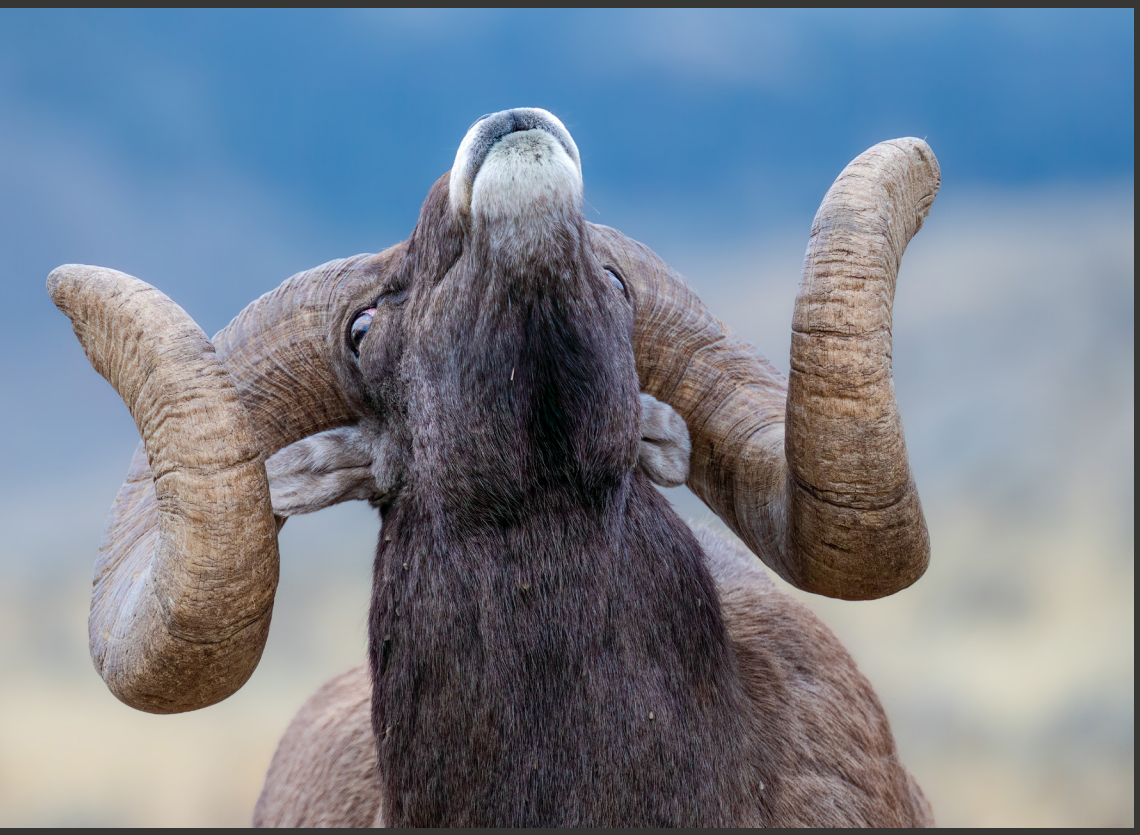
COLE KIMZEY

Above: Mountain goat in southwestern Montana

BRIAN POWERS

Right: Short-eared owl swooping over an osprey in the Mission Valley





CRAIG BARFOOT
Left: Bighorn ram north of Gardiner

ROBERT HANSON
Left: Whitetail bucks sparring in western Montana

LAURA VERHAEGHE
Top left: Magpie in the Mission Valley

JAY CROSS
Left: Weasel in winter coat

THOMAS ASTLE
Middle left: Greater short-horned lizard in the Pryor Mountains

JERRY TAYLOR
Left: Bighorn sheep near Corwin Springs

BRIAN CHRISTIANSON
Right: First light on the Chinese Wall

KEVIN LEAGUE

Top: Sunset near Eagle Creek in the Upper Missouri River Breaks

ZACK CLOTHIER

Right: One ancient pine frames another during a fiery sunrise on a high plateau in northern Montana

ELIZABETH MOORE

Left: The small but mighty pika

CHUCK HANEY

Bottom: Sunset over the Two Medicine River at Rock City near Valier

JACOB LILLEY
Top left: A trio of ibises in Upper Red Rock Lake

LOIS SHELDON
Left: Long-billed curlew in the Big Snowy Mountains near Lewistown

RHEA ASHMORE
Bottom left: Spring storm near Flathead Lake

JOHN CARUSO
Opposite top and bottom: Great blue heron making a meal of a Columbia spotted frog at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge near Stevensville

BRIAN POWERS

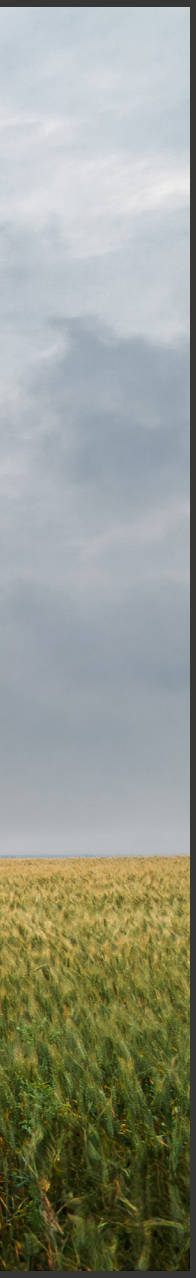
Left: Mule deer buck in fall colors on the CSKT Bison Range

PATRICK SHEPARD

Left: Autumn on Rattlesnake Creek near Missoula

CHRIS MCGOWAN

Right: Double Falls on the Rocky Mountain Front west of Augusta



SEAN HEAVEY
Top left: A large supercell thunderstorm near Winnett

ELIZABETH MOORE
Top right: Ferruginous hawk

STEVE LEITNER
Bottom left: Homestead in a wheat field near Hogeland

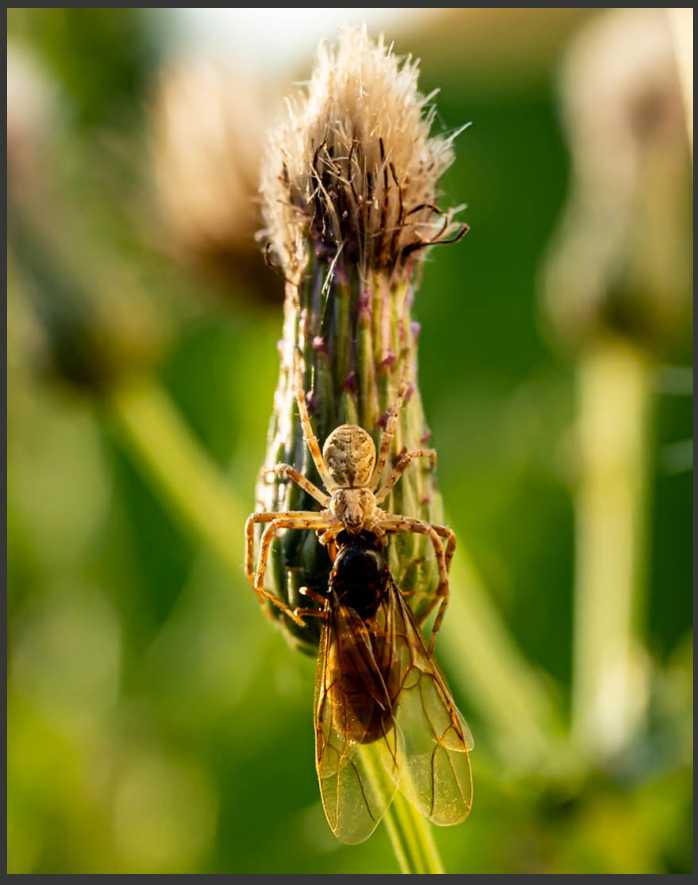
STEVE LEITNER
Bottom right: Three Buttes northwest of Hayes

BILL KINNEY

Above: Sandhill crane grabbing an unlucky vole in the Big Belt Mountains

KELIN KELLY

Right: Ground crab spider feasting on a fly near Three Forks

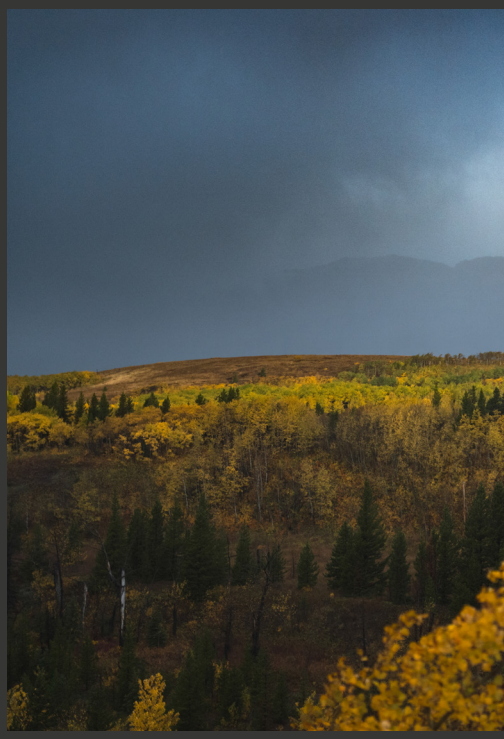


DIANNE MCDERMAND

Left: Coyote near the Big Hole River

BILL KINNEY

Below: Pronghorn buck thrashing vegetation in a dominance display during the rut in the Big Belt Mountains



BRIAN POWERS
Above: Winter sunlight through a frosty pine

STEVEN GNAM
Middle top: Rainbow over the Badger-Two Medicine

TAMRA HATCH
Middle bottom: Sapphire Mountain ridge huckleberry in the morning fog

DEE LINNELL BLANK

Right: Frost coats moss and lichens on a tree

MICHAEL CARL

Left: An angler casts a fly in the Bob Marshall Wilderness

MICHAEL CARL

Right: A likely hybrid cutthroat-rainbow trout

BRIAN CHRISTIANSON

Bottom left: Mountain goat in the Great Burn area southwest of Superior

ALEX WEST

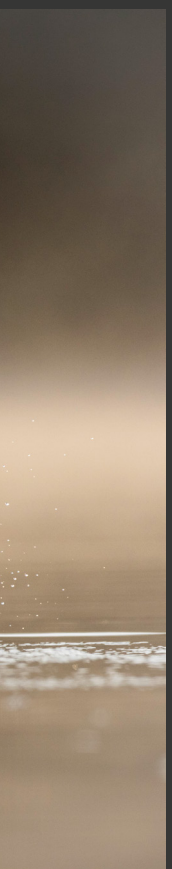
Below: Morning light on Crow Lake in the Beartooth Mountains

STEVE WRIGHT
Right: Bridge over the Stillwater River in Kalispell

CHRIS AUCH
Opposite right: Winter moose in western Montana

DONALD M. JONES
Right: Common loon near Troy

MICHAEL BECKWORTH
Opposite right: Fresh snow near Anaconda



ROBERT KELLY
Top left: Sandhill cranes at sunset

MICHAEL CARL
Top middle: Westslope cutthroat trout in the South Fork of the Flathead River

THOMAS ASTLE
Middle left: Femur long-horned beetle

STEVEN GNAM
Bottom left: Northern flicker feather

MICHAEL CARL
Bottom right: Water reflections on the Flathead River

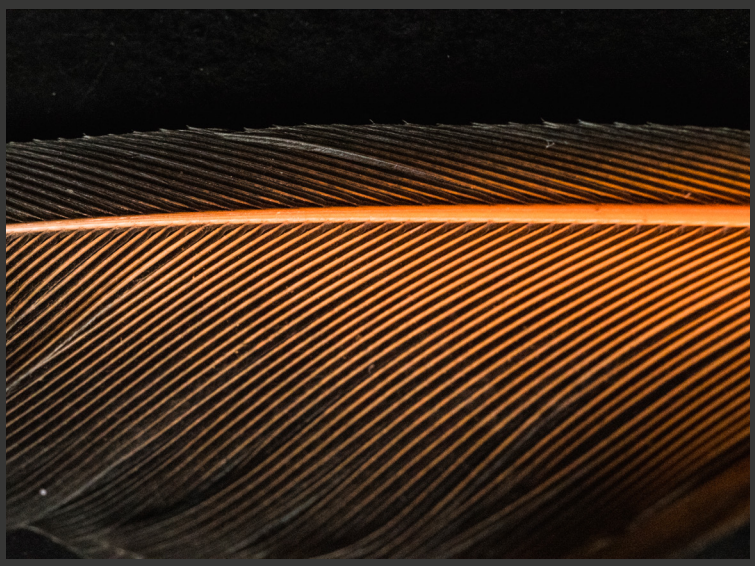
Opposite page:

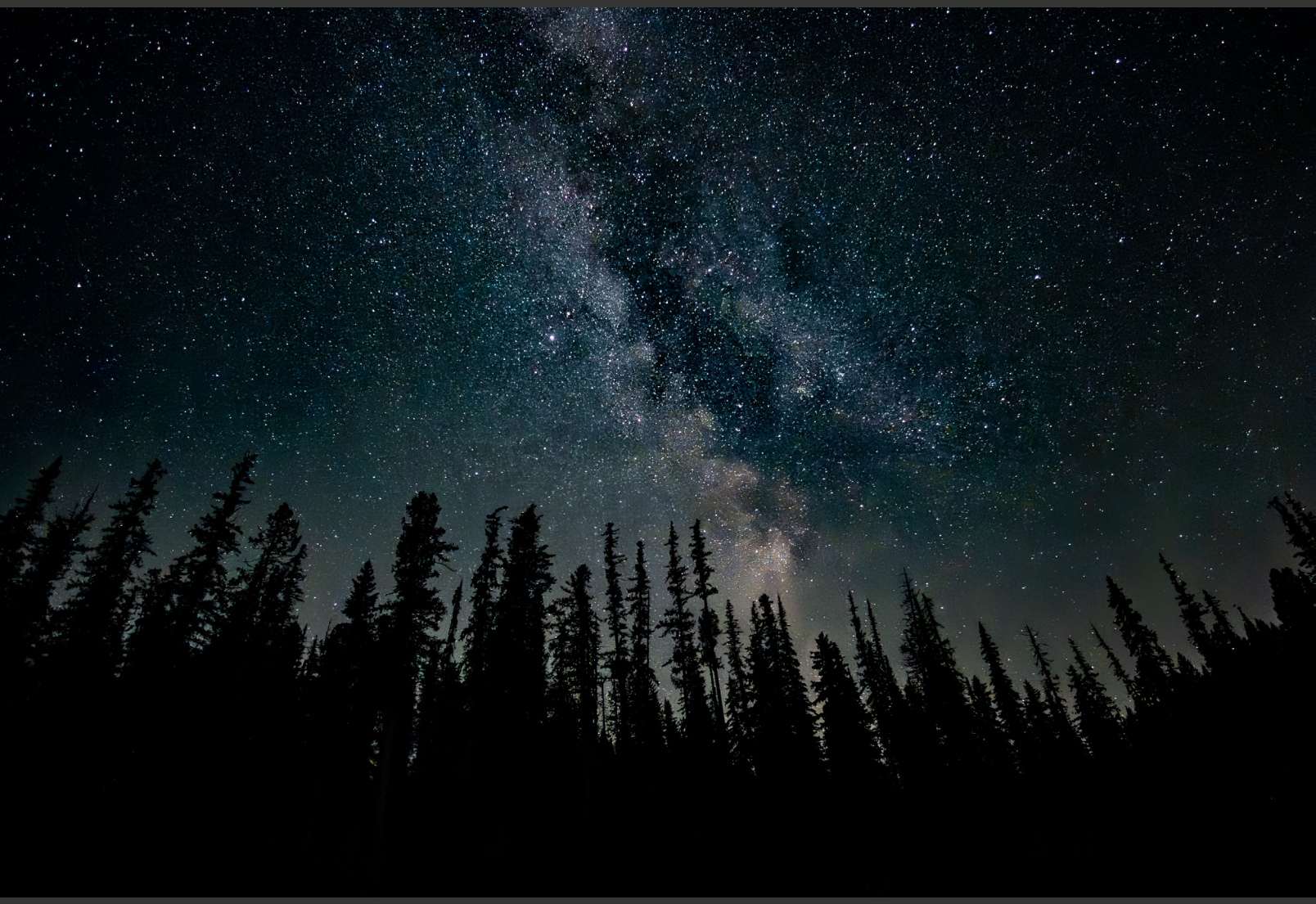
CHARLES RENFRO
Top: Common loon in northwestern Montana

BRYAN FERRITER
Middle left: Piper Creek in the Mission Mountains

BILL KINNEY
Middle right: Mountain bluebirds sharing a meal in the Big Belt Mountains

WILLIAM NEAL
Bottom right: Rufous hummingbird





HOLLY SHELDON

Above: Starry night at Hungry Horse Reservoir

ZACK CLOTHIER

Above: Grizzly bear via camera trap in western Montana

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

DEE LINNELL BLANK
A rainbow in the spray of Holland Falls in the Swan Range north of Seeley Lake

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